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Entre

Feltham

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——— *"Those who are unhappy without guilt, ought to be relieved; and the life which is overburdened by accumulated calamity, set at ease by the care of the public."*

Doctor Johnson.

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MR. FLOYD'S REPORT.

A Letter from ——— to his Friend in Ohio.

I LITTLE thought, my dear M. when you got my promise to keep you informed of all matters pertaining to our Indians, that I should have found myself involved, so soon afterwards, in such a wilderness of schemes. But having committed myself, I will be as good as my word. Should my track, however, be circuitous, or the way I may choose to disentangle this Indian subject from the intricacy in which it appears likely to become involved, you must charge the toil of following me to the account of your own curiosity,—or I would

rather say, to your solicitude for the welfare of this unfortunate race.

In my last I enclosed you Mr. Floyd's bill, which I accompanied with a few remarks—Those remarks might have been enlarged, and made to embrace the views which divide us in our Indian policy. But I reserved them for the report:—This I have just read; and, having obtained a spare copy, I enclose it to you.

This, you will say, is a prettily written paper—and so indeed it is; and the historical sketch which it furnishes of the successive and various claims to the regions bordering the Pacific, as also of *the fur trade*, is quite honourable to the author. There is no doubt but the title to the territory, or region, in question, is fairly vested in the United States—And soon may the Columbia and all the borders of the Pacific, be peopled with the freemen of our happy country!—Our flag, it should seem, ought to be welcomed every where; or if there be a point of doubt as to our right to any one spot of that vast country, the thought that

nothing but freedom and peace, justice and humanity, are authorised to repose under it, ought to ensure to it the greeting of all over whom it might be appointed to wave. How happy is it for us, my dear M. that ours is *"the land of the free, and the home of the brave."*———

This report brings out the conclusion that "the fur trade, and that prosecuted by "the whalers are the most valuable to this "nation, and demand its care and atten- "tion in a high degree." It is admitted that both are valuable. But the mode of applying this "attention," as far as its application relates to the *fur trade*, I am not prepared to recognize. This mode is set forth in the bill which accompanied the report, and on which I have already, in my last letter, partially remarked. It embraces an abandonment of the Indians by the government, so far as its trade with them is concerned; and a surrender of them to the enterprising of our country, who may feel willing to succeed to this intercourse. I propose, so far as the limits of a letter

may authorize it, to examine the policy of such a measure.

You will remark that it is the *value* of the fur trade which is dwelt upon; and this being admitted, the conclusion is assumed that the best way to distribute this wealth amongst our citizens, is to throw open a way for their free admission into the Indian country, in the same manner as the way to the Pacific is open for all who may think proper to engage in the whale trade. Both these trades, it has been admitted, are sources of wealth; but I deny that they are, for that reason, entitled to be explored under the same policy, or by the same means.—The right to harpoon whales and the right to hold intercourse with human beings are two things; and stand in very different lights, and bear very differently on the government which has the destiny of each at its disposal. When I see a set of enterprising men hoist sail and steer for the Pacific in quest of whales and blubber, I indulge those feelings which belong to such an enterprize. I see in the undertaking

no possible harm which can result to any thing but themselves—and hence I wish them safety and success. My thoughts do not reach beyond these two points.—But when I see a company of fur traders, with their outfit about them, on their way to the wilderness, to trade with a weak, an ignorant, and helpless race of men, I have other thoughts than those which relate to the safety and success of these traders:—I think also of the moral intelligences with whom they are going to hold intercourse; and wish also that these may share, at least, in the distributions of justice and humanity.

You may say, perhaps, these traders do not go to harm those Indians.—This, it is true, may not be their object. But there is no remedy for the consequence—they must be injured, and deeply so, some way or other. Either in the thirst for gain, injustice will be practised upon them, and their toils will be rewarded by trinkets and intoxication; or their peace will be broken by the conflicts which opposing interests, in

such a traffic, never fail to give rise to. Or even if this were not so, there is nothing in the scheme of such an intercourse which promises improvement to the Indians, *politically, intellectually,* or *morally,*—but there is every thing in it which involves all these.

Now, I will ask, if this be so, and if there be an obligation binding on our government to protect, and defend, and improve this people; and if there is a way by which all this can be accomplished without infringing one *iota* on the privileges of our citizens, ought not our government to enter upon it, and accomplish with the least possible delay, all that is embraced in such a view of the subject? I will illustrate these several points in the course of the following remarks.—But will first consider what is thought to be the most popular view of Mr. Floyd's plan.

The wealth of the fur trade is represented as being the common property of the nation—the heritage of our citizens; and so it is admitted to be. But the question is,

whether, upon the plan of Mr. Floyd, this wealth would be as *generally* realized as he supposes? My opinion is, it would not. Suppose then, by way of illustration, the trade with our Indians to be open to individual enterprize, how many of the citizens of this republic, think you, would engage in it? I will hazard the opinion that the whole number, although sufficient for the purposes of prosecuting the trade and producing the consequences which are the legitimate progeny of such an intercourse, would bear so diminutive a proportion to the bulk of our population, as not even to be missed out of their respective neighbourhoods. I will suppose, further, that the intercourse of these traders would be in exact harmony with the paramount obligations of the government to civilize and improve our Indians: and, further, that the traders would realize all the furs which the most extravagant calculations have counted.—How, I ask, is this to enrich *the citizens* of our country? By one of two ways, I answer,—or by both—Either the furs, by

being thrown into our markets in such quantities as to lessen their value, would reduce the prices of our hats, and all other articles of which they constitute a material; or by exportation, and the bringing home articles of consumption in such quantities as would lessen the price of such articles to consumers. In no other way can it be made out that our *citizens generally* are concerned in this trade in furs. It is true the individuals engaged in the trade may amass wealth; and I am aware that, generally speaking, what enriches the individuals of a nation imparts strength to the body,—and that the nation is, therefore, proportionally benefitted in the prosperity of its citizens. But it may happen that a trade may enrich those who are personally engaged in its prosecution, at the expense of the rest of a community. Nor would the case be at all provided against by the general permission to engage in it, because it might chance to be of such a nature as to put it in the power of a few, only, to undertake its prosecution. And this

appears to me to be the situation of the trade in question; and the results just glanced at may, therefore, be expected to flow from the proposed free admission of individuals into the Indian country as participators in this trade.

I will suppose, then, the way to be open; that the traders have performed their tour, and that the furs are realized. What comes next? Why to sell them, of course. Then suppose the prices of the China market, for example, to be double the prices at home. Do you not think the furs would be all shipped to China? Then what does this imply? Why, of course, that our manufactures, if they would retain any portion of them, must pay the China prices, freight, insurance, &c. less. Then, these being double what the manufactures have been hitherto giving, our hats—and we all wear hats—would cost, instead of eight or ten dollars, sixteen or twenty! This can not be supposed to enrich our citizens.

Thus you see how easy the transition would be from this shew of general privi-

leges to a monopoly—a monopoly of the few, who would engage in this trade at the expense of the many.

Or suppose these furs to be exported and return cargoes to be brought home, and that the consumers should be benefitted by the cheapness of the articles imported, to such an extent as to *balance* the double price which this monopoly of furs had forced them to pay for the articles into which they were wrought,—would *the citizens* be any the better by such a policy? In the first view of the subject an absolute tax is implied; and the next, *a possibility,* only, that an equivalent might be got for it.

Who, then, is it proposed to enrich by this "great vein of wealth," as it is sometimes called? Why those only, I answer, who work it. But ought the guardians of the people to surrender this privilege to the comparatively few who would engage in it, at the hazard of involving the rest in a tax? It should seem not.

You will not suppose me extravagant in confounding this scheme of general privi-

lege with a monopoly. Nothing appears to me more certain than such a consequence. All the smaller channels of this trade would be either choaked up, or *forced* to run into the great reservoir; and the power of such an organization as "the American Fur Company," so called, would swell to its utmost limits; whilst, as has been stated, the ordinary supplies for our home use would be drawn off at such rates as this vast monopoly might choose to fix. And who can question for a moment but these rates would be always determined by the foreign demand?

But suppose I change the article of fur for an article with which we are, as a people, a little better acquainted.—Take, then, the article of flour;—and I will suppose the wheat and the mills all to be in the north and north-west, and to be within reach of only a comparatively small portion of our population, as the furs happen to be. Would you think it prudent to place the article of flour, *under the mere show of a general privilege to deal in it,* in the hands

of the few who would engage in the flour trade? For you must take along with you the fact, that it is in the power of only a few to become traders in furs;—and the same limits are supposed to be assigned to the number of flour dealers. A man may have both the means and the inclination; yet he might lack the daring and skill, *with some other essential ingredients,* which must always enter into the composition of the character of a fur trader, before he can do any thing in the business. I have reference to those only who hold personal intercourse with the Indians.

From such views as these, thrown very hastily together, you may gather how uncertain is the conclusion which some come to so suddenly; and which takes it for-granted that because a provision should be adopted, purporting to admit every body who might choose to enter the Indian country as a fur trader, that therefore our *citizens generally* would be enriched by the arrangement.

But *the people*, on whose shoulders the consequences of such projects are sure to fall, have other things to apprehend besides this tax to those who may engage in the fur trade. I have gone along, you will remark, under the supposition that all this intercourse would be harmonious; that the peace of the forests would be guarded by these adventurers; and that no conflicts would result requiring the interference of the government, and the expenditure of the public money, to fight down the angry billows on which the bark of avarice is destined necessarily to ride; and, moreover, that no innocent blood, the consequence of such excitements, would be shed. But where is the point in the history of our country that will countenance the supposition? I refer to this volume, and challenge the advocates of this free admission of traders into the Indian country to disprove the assertion, that of all the Indian wars which we have had at least three-fourths of them owe their origin to this very trade. Look for the cause of the cap-

ture of Michillimackinac, in our late war, and where will you find it?—Trace all the consequences of that premature capture,—in the triumph which it shouted through our Indian population; in the blood which flowed from it; and in the vast sums of money which it took to restore the balance of victory in that quarter, the most of which might have been avoided but for that unfortunate capture,—and you may make up an amount which the private traders, were they to labour for *the general welfare* for as many years as have gone round since that period, would be unable to restore.

Then if no *general* advantage to our citizens can be reasonably expected to result from the scheme under consideration; but a possibility, at least, of a tax upon every man not a party to it; and if certain consequences, prejudicial to the harmony and peace of the most helpless and dependent portion of our population, as well as demands upon the Treasury, and the shedding of human blood, and the involvement of innocent lives, are in the train of this

policy, does it not become the Congress to exercise its best discretion, and the wisdom which is admitted to belong to it, before they resolve upon a course involving consequences so serious?

There are then, it seems, other and higher claims upon the consideration of the Congress than those which embrace a bare tender of doubtful privileges to our citizens. The subject widens at this point, and two distinct and separate obligations rise to view,—each of them claiming to be seriously considered. I do not mean that any thing I have stated shall be understood as tending to impair the obligations of the Congress to regard the pecuniary welfare of our citizens. This is a duty of acknowledged importance. But should an attempt to promote this welfare clash with more imposing obligations, wisdom and prudence would demand that a compromise be resorted to. It happens however that in the subject of the present discussion the privileges and general interests of the citizens are in the most perfect harmony with the

obligations of justice and humanity. Upon the one hand, it is binding on the government of this country—and no man having any sense of justice will dispute it—to resort to every method which shall be consistent with its means, and the rights of others, to ameliorate and improve the condition of our Indians.—Sound policy unites with justice and humanity in proclaiming this to be a paramount duty. Upon the other hand, it is ceeded that whatever advantages consistent with this obligation can be derived to our citizens from the fur trade ought to be yielded to them. Both these objects I hold it the government has it completely in its power to realize. But no agency other than that which proceeds directly from the government and is held accountable to it, and is subject in all things to its control, is fit to be trusted with their important consequences. The following are my reasons.

In the first place, a prosecution of the fur trade by those whose interest it would be to drive it to the utmost advantages of

which it would be susceptible, implies a perpetuation of the present abject and suffering condition of our Indians—It amounts to a decree fixing them, irretrievably, in the hunter, and, by consequence, in the savage state. Every consideration of policy, of justice, and humanity, must, from the very nature of this trade, be absorbed in the paramount object of making gains. If we had no history to demonstrate the consequences of such an intercourse, common sense would supply the deficiency. In the next place, as I have endeavoured to show, when the furs, &c. should be realized, the advantages, so far from being general in their application to our citizens, would be partial and confined to the comparatively few who would be engaged in the trade, whilst, from the controul that these traders would obtain over the fur market, our population generally, so far from deriving advantage from the scheme, would be taxed for its support. From such a view, it should seem that an intermediate and disinterested agency is called for.—an agency

which, whilst it should be free with the one hand, without pressing the hunter state beyond its due limits, to receive from the Indians the furs, &c. which they might take, encouraging them, meanwhile, in all the departments of political, intellectual and moral improvement; with the other hand turn over to our manufacturers and merchants the furs thus received. These furs by being disposed of at public auction, or otherwise, as circumstances might authorise, and in lots to suit purchasers, would be placed in the hands of the manufacturer and merchant, the only two descriptions of our citizens who are interested in this matter. Thus might they participate in whatever advantages are to be derived from the fur trade. The difference, and *only* difference, would be, the government would stand between the private traders, and the Indians, as a shield to the latter, without depriving the former of a single privilege, save only that of engaging *personally* in the trade.

Where then, I will ask, is all this monopoly with which the government has been charged?—Where all this nefarious intermedling?—Where this usurpation of *"the rights of citizens?"* Is there not in the scheme at which I have just hinted every thing which is just and humane towards the Indians, and every thing towards our civilized population which embraces an equality of rights and privileges, save only the exercise of such a privilege as must from its very nature involve the rights and improvement of the Indians, and with very little less certainty the rights of the body of our citizens?

I find it impossible to look at this subject without deriving from *the very anxiety* of those who are pressing so hard for the unrestrained privilege to trade with our Indians, an evidence that out of the privilege would result every thing like injustice to these helpless people. It must be *for the sake* of the additional gains which their scheme of trade, and their practice upon it, would insure to them, which induces such

a solicitude to overcome and put down whatever system may lie in the way of their *personal* intercourse—Else why not be willing to see placed between them and the Indians an intermediate and disinterested agency which would turn over for their use, and the use of the community at large, the same furs, &c. which they themselves would receive were they in the place of such agency?

At this very point lies the secret of the whole matter. The traders know full well at what rates they obtain the furs, &c. from the Indians, and by what artifice they are realized; and they rightly infer that for the just policy of the government to intervene would be to lessen their profits in the proportion as their artifices should be made to give way to humanity and justice. But is this a reason why the government should abandon these impoverished and afflicted people?—Or does it not rather serve to confirm the claims which the very relation in which we stand to them originates?*

Never, my dear friend, will this subject be rightly legislated upon, till, as becomes

* ——"This charming country belonged to the Indians—over these fields, and through these forests, their beloved forefathers once, in careless gaiety, pursued their sports and hunted their game; every returning day found them the sole, the peaceful, the happy proprietors of this extensive domain. But the white man came, and lo!——the animated chase, the feast, the dance, the song of fearless, thoughtless joy were over. Ever since, they have been made to drink of the bitter cup of humiliation; treated like dogs,—their lives, their liberties, the sport of the white men;—their country, and the graves of their fathers torn from them in cruel succession: until, driven from river to river, from forest to forest, and through a period of two hundred years rolled back, nation upon nation, they find themselves fugitives, vagrants and strangers in their own country!" SPY.

Of this country which once was theirs, 191 millions, 978 thousand, 536 acres have been ceeded to us since 1784. Of these lands 44 millions, 229 thousand, 837 dol-dollars' worth have been sold. And what have the Indians received, and what are they to receive, for all this immeasurable domain?—Why an aggregate of 2 millions, 542 thousand, 916 dollars, sixty-six cents,—*less than one cent and one third of a cent per acre!*

But take, *in addition* to the above, all that has been expended for,

1st. Incidental expenses attending the intercourse with different tribes of Indians; purchase of implements of husbandry, stock, &c. expenses attending their visits to the seat of government rations issued, &c.

the magnanimity* of the government—to say nothing of its true policy—it shall decide upon the destiny of our Indians upon some such scheme as I have hinted at.

Never before has such a period been witnessed as the present. From the land-

2d. Pay and expenses of the commissioners holding conferences and making treaties; pay of their secretaries, interpreters, &c.

3d. Pay of agents, factors, clerks, superintendents, &c.

4th. Presents in money.

5th. Presents in goods.

6th. Pay of commissioners, surveyors, interpreters, and others, engaged in surveying and fixing boundary lines, and expenses incidental thereto—and add, even,

7th. TRADE FUND—Making a *sum total* of 5 millions, 921 thousand, 181 dollars and sixty-three cents,—which, if put against the lands received from them, will make the cost *less* than *three cents* per acre !!!

There appears to be some room here for the exercise of liberality, even though the subject resolved itself into this point.—But liberality has but a small share in the obligation which binds us to better the condition of these Indians. *Justice demands it.*

* "Let me not be told that the Indians are too dark and fierce to be affected by generous and noble sentiments. I will not believe it. Magnanimity can never be lost on a nation which has produced an Alknomook, a Logan and a Pocahuntas." SEE.

ing of our fathers at Plymouth, and at Jamestown, till now, putting the whole of all the plans for aboriginal reform together, they would not make up such a system as is in operation at this moment for the preservation and improvement of our Indians. We have at this time living testimony enough to outweigh all the scepticism in the universe; and the practicability, nay *the facility*, of civilizing and christianizing this benighted people now rests upon the basis of demonstration. Go to the school called Brainard, and to Spring Place, in the Cherokee country,—to the school called Elliott, in the Chactaw country,—and there you will find, by the hundred, witnesses to support the hitherto sneered at theory which embraced a civilization of the Indians. These establishments are multiplying. On the Arkansas and Osage rivers similar organizations will soon be in operation; and the Council Bluffs, and other points, are about to be visited with a view to similar locations.—And all these are under the direction of men of science and

standing, and commanding influence in society—men who have examined thoroughly into the matter, and know the strength of the foundation on which it rests.

But what, you may ask, has our trade with the Indians to do with all this?—Enough, I answer. A trade established by the government on the plan at which I have barely hinted, would tend from its very nature to keep the peace of the desert. Its character and the harmony of its parts would secure to the Indians the absence of any thing like excitement and strife; and, without some such agency, former experience demonstrates how ineffectual the plans for civilization must be. Such a system of trade would act upon the Indian population the part which the angel acted towards the tree of life—it would keep the way to them. And whilst it did this, the benevolent associations of our country, whose exertions are doing them so much honour, would go in every where and find the task of civilization easy. But let this system, or even the mutilated likeness to it which is now

in operation, be broken down, and the way to the Indian country opened at all points for avarice to stalk in; then farewell—a long farewell—to all those brightning prospects, those encouraging hopes.—— Doomed to be the slaves of this greedy and voracious god, no expectations need be indulged of controling, by means of these nursaries of humanity, its agitating and boistrous march.—Every thing in the shape of Indian improvement must fly before it, like the blossoms of spring before the raging blast.

You may see, my dear M. what sort of responsibility rests with the Congress, and how the destiny of our Indians hangs upon the decisions of that body.—How calamitous, if that course shall be pursued that must involve the extinction of the hopes which the friends to civilization are every where indulging—And how dark an hour must that be to the poor Indians!

There might be some plea in these times of economy, against the adoption of any plan, for the present at least, which might

call for an investment of the public money; and the plea might be strengthened if the plan embraced a probability of loosing money. It is true it has been roundly asserted that the present government system has resulted in a loss to the nation—But the assertion is groundless. It ought not, however, to have been matter of surprize if such were the fact: for the system has been assailed by all the schemes that could be contrived; and nothing which the hope of overthrowing it could lead a well-tutored artifice to contrive, has been left unresorted to for the accomplishment of such a result. But the gains for the eight years last past are, notwithstanding, upwards of fifty-eight thousand dollars—or, if the pay of the agents employed in it be deducted from those gains,—which, by the way, was never intended—still the capital is preserved; and that is all the law ever contemplated.

To be thoroughly useful, and accomplish all that such a system as I have hinted at, it should be freed from every opposing and

countervailing influence. The Indians of our country should be placed within, and made to depend upon, it; and the power to regulate and govern the trade ought to be lodged in the President of the United States. A capital corresponding to the extent of the system should be allotted.—Then the work of justice, of humanity, of general improvement, would go on. With the most perfect justice to the Indians, enough of profits might be realised to reimburse the Treasury the interest on the capital employed,—stock farms, aid in the erection of mills, establish schools, and, in a word, sustain the whole system of civilization throughout. Thus, after paying the interest on the capital employed, the profits on the trade would return upon those from whom they were derived, for their improvement and happiness.

This is the rough outline of the plan which I would take in preference to Mr. Floyd's. If it be rejected now, the day must come, either here or hereafter, when its claims will present themselves under

the sanction of justice, and under circumstances not to be resisted.

When I contemplate the Congress of the United States, and conceive it to be constituted of honourable men,—men who do not permit themselves to yield to a single feeling unless it shall embrace the general (not particular) welfare—men to whom God and the people have delegated the guardianship, as well over our Indians as our civilized population, I cannot doubt the issue of the present contention for privileges to trade with the Indians. It will be soothing to this body to reflect—and reflection will have its course sooner or later—that their object in consenting to act the distinguished part of legislators, and guardians, was to contribute towards the enlargement of the circle of human happiness.

Adieu.—

P. S. I have this moment received, and examined, *another* Indian bill. It is from Colonel Trimble of the Senate. This bill

is really an excellent bill in many of its parts; and, for the system which it recognizes, is very good. *But then it comes to the same point.* The Indians are not to be *looked in the face* nor taken by the hand by the government, but by those whose interest it will be to keep them savages.—It shivers on this point.—And so must any bill—no matter how good it is in itself—which shall not embrace a provision placing *the government* between the Indians and private traders. I inclose you this bill also.